

Nada Lutfiah. Nada wrote to Maggie, and I translate into English. "My good friend: Hello, friend. My name is Nada Lutfiah. I was so happy and my heart was touched to receive the letter you sent us. My family, my dad, mom, older brother, and younger brother have disappeared, and now I live with my cousins. I hope you are healthy and well where you are. I am so glad you are paying attention to us here. I hope to receive your bracelet in the coming days, because I want to wear it on my arm to remind me that I have new friend. Your friend, Nada."

I have asked my Ambassador Soemadi to personally deliver Nada's letter and photo to Maggie in Michigan.

These two letters are extraordinary, both in the words they conveyed and in the fact that two youngsters from entirely different background made a connection: An American girl who prays at church, collects loose change, and make bracelet for tsunami kids two oceans away; an Indonesian Muslim girl who lost all her family and wants to kill the pain and is eager just to be a kid again, just like Maggie. I think the world will be a better place if all of us start to have connections and conversation the way Maggie and Nada did.

I thank you very much.

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you very much for such a powerful speech. And it's in that spirit of compassion that we—it's my honor to now award the volunteer awards.

Commander, please read the citations.

[At this point, Lt. Col. Steven T. Fisher, USA, Army Aide to the President, read the citations, and the awards were presented.]

President Bush. Mr. President, I hope you can tell by the short presentation of—to some of our great citizens that the true strength of America, our true strength lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens.

I'm proud that you've joined us today. Thank you all for coming. May God bless our respective countries, and may God continue to bless the American people.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ambassador Sichan Siv, U.S. Representative to the U.N. Economic and Social

Council, and his wife, Martha; and Eni Faleomavaega, American Samoa's Representative to the U.S. Congress. President Yudhoyono referred to U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia B. Lynn Pascoe; and Indonesia's Ambassador to the U.S. Soemadi Brotodiningrat.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Priscilla R. Owen as U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit

May 25, 2005

I applaud the Senate for voting to confirm Justice Priscilla Owen. She has served with distinction on the Supreme Court of Texas, has demonstrated that she strictly interprets the law, and brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. I urge the Senate to build on this progress and provide my judicial nominees the up-or-down votes they deserve.

Proclamation 7906—National Homeownership Month, 2005

May 25, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For millions of individuals and families, the American Dream starts with owning a home. When families move into a home of their own, they gain independence and confidence, and their faith in the future grows. The spread of ownership and opportunity helps give our citizens a vital stake in the future of America and the chance to realize the great promise of our country.

From the earliest days of our Nation, homeownership has embodied the core American values of individual freedom, personal responsibility, and self-reliance. A home provides children with a safe environment in which to grow and learn. A home is also a tangible asset that provides owners with borrowing power and allows our citizens to build wealth that they can pass on to their children and grandchildren.

The benefits of homeownership extend to our communities. Families who own their

own homes have a strong interest in maintaining the value of their investments, the safety of their neighborhoods, and the quality of their schools. Homeownership is also a bedrock of the American economy, helping to increase jobs, boost demand for goods and services, and build prosperity.

More Americans than ever own their own homes, but we must continue to work hard so that every family has an opportunity to realize the American Dream. In 2002, I announced a goal to add 5.5 million new minority homeowners by the end of the decade. Since then, we have added 2.3 million new minority households. My Administration has also set a goal of adding 7 million new affordable homes to the market within the next 10 years. In my FY 2006 budget, I proposed a single family housing tax credit and two mortgage programs—the Zero Downpayment mortgage and the Payment Incentives program—to help more families achieve homeownership. In 2003, I signed the American Dream Downpayment Act, and I have proposed more than \$200 million to continue the American Dream Downpayment Initiative to provide downpayment assistance to thousands of American families. By promoting initiatives such as financial literacy, tax incentives for building affordable homes, voucher programs, and Individual Development Accounts, we are strengthening our communities and improving citizens' lives.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2005 as National Homeownership Month. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies and activities recognizing the importance of homeownership.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 27, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 31.

The President's News Conference With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority

May 26, 2005

President Bush. Thank you. Mr. President, it is my honor to welcome the democratically elected leader of the Palestinian people to the White House.

We meet at a time when a great achievement of history is within reach, the creation of a peaceful, democratic Palestinian state. President Abbas is seeking that goal by rejecting violence and working for democratic reform. I believe the Palestinian people are fully capable of justly governing themselves in peace with their neighbors. I believe the interests of the Israeli people would be served by a peaceful Palestinian state. And I believe that now is the time for all parties of this conflict to move beyond old grievances and act forcefully in the cause of peace.

President Abbas's election 4 months ago was a tribute to the power and appeal of democracy and an inspiration to the people across the region. Palestinians voted against violence and for sovereignty, because only the defeat of violence will lead to sovereignty.

Mr. President, the United States and the international community applaud your rejection of terrorism. All who engage in terror are the enemies of a Palestinian state and must be held to account. We will stand with you, Mr. President, as you combat corruption, reform the Palestinian security services and your justice system, and revive your economy. Mr. President, you have made a new start on a difficult journey requiring courage and leadership each day, and we will take that journey together.

As we work for peace, other countries must step up to their responsibilities. Arab states must take concrete measures to create a regional environment conducive to peace. They must offer financial assistance to support the peaceful efforts of President Abbas, his Government, and the Palestinian people. And they must refuse to assist or harbor terrorists.